

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2183

DEPT PLS PASS AMB KEATING

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP (MCGOVERN, GEORGE)

SUBJ: CODEL MCGOVERN THROWS SPOTLIGHT BACK ON
PALESTINIANS

1. SUMMARY: CODEL MCGOVERN PURSUED EXTREMELY FULL
SCHEDULE DURING VISIT TO ISRAEL APRIL 2-7. HE MET
WITH ISRAELIS, BOTH OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE, ACROSS
ENTIRE RANGE OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM AND LISTENED
ATTENTIVELY TO ALL VIEWS. IN ISRAELI MIND VISIT WAS
CONTROVERSIAL EVENT FROM OUTSET, BOTH BECAUSE OF
WELL-PUBLICIZED VISIT WITH ARAFAT BEFORE ARRIVAL AND
BECAUSE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS (DUE TO COINCIDENCE
WITH JEWISH PASSOVER) WAS VISITS WITH SEVERAL WEST
BANK ARABS NOT CONSIDERED BY ISRAELIS TO BE PART OF
"ESTABLISHMENT". INEVITABLE RESULT WAS THAT VISIT
FOCUSSED ISRAELI ATTENTION ANEW ON PALESTINIAN
ISSUE IN RATHER PROVOCATIVE MANNER. ISRAELIS
NEVERTHELESS PROVED TO BE GRACIOUS HOSTS AND
SHOWED POLITE TOLERANCE FOR WHAT SENATOR HAD TO SAY.
END SUMMARY.

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2. SUBSTANCE OF SENATOR'S MESSAGE WAS CONVEYED

INDIRECTLY IN FORM OF QUESTION WHICH HE INSERTED EARLY IN MOST DISCUSSIONS: WHAT WOULD BE HARM TO ISRAEL IF IT WERE TO STATE PUBLICLY ITS WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW TO SLIGHTLY MODIFIED 1967 BORDERS AND WERE TO ACCEPT THE VALIDITY OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN ENTITY SOLELY ON THE CONDITION THAT ALL ARAB STATES RECOGNIZE THE PERMANENT AND INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL AS A JEWISH STATE? DESCRIBING HIMSELF AS A CONSTANT FRIEND OF ISRAEL, HE AT SAME TIME, HIGHLIGHTED THE NEED FOR BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND THE ARAB WORLD AND THE NECESSITY OF ENCOURAGING FORCES OF MODERATION WITHIN ARAB WORLD.

3. MOST DISCUSSIONS QUICKLY FOCUSSED ON PROSPECTS FOR PALESTINIAN STATE. (EXCEPTIONS WERE DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR ISRAELI LEADERS WHICH TENDED TO CONCENTRATE MORE ON CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS- TEL AVIV 2052). ISRAELIS OF ALL PERSUASIONS ATTEMPTED TO CONVINCE CODEL OF OVERRIDING NEED FOR PRIOR RECOGNITION BY PLO OF LEGITIMATE RIGHT OF ISRAEL TO EXIST AS INDEPENDENT STATE, WITH MANY CITING CONTINUING PLO ADHERENCE TO PRINCIPLES OF PALESTINIAN COVENANT AS EVIDENCE THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE FOOLISH TO TAKE FIRST STEP TOWARD BREAKING NON-RECOGNITION BARRIER. FOLLOWING IS BRIEF RESUME OF POINTS MADE TO CODEL.

4. ONLY TWO ISRAELIS WITH WHOM CODEL DISCUSSED ISSUE AGREED THAT GOI SHOULD TAKE INITIATIVE VIS-A-VIS PLO: PHILOSOPHY PROFESSOR AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY WHO DESCRIBED SELF AS SUPPORTER OF MOKED PARTY, AND MK LOVA ELIAV, WHO RECENTLY BOLTED LABOR PARTY. BOTH ARGUED THAT ISRAELI INITIATIVE WOULD HELP RESTORE ISRAEL'S CREDIBILITY IN INTERNATIONAL ARENA AND WOULD PLACE DECISION-MAKING BURDEN ON BACK OF PLO WHERE IT BELONGS.

5. ABBA EBAN MADE IT CLEAR HE PREFERRED NEGOTIATING CONFIDENTIAL

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WEST BANK SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN. IF THIS PROVED IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE RABAT DECISIONS, HOWEVER, HE WOULD OPT FOR AN ISRAELI INITIATIVE ON RECOGNITION AS OPPOSED TO LEAVING THE PUBLIC RELATIONS FIELD TO THE PLO.

6. ON THE ROLE OF WEST BANKERS, SENATOR WAS ASSURED BY MANY ISRAELIS THAT HE HAD SPOKEN WITH

"UNREPRESENTATIVE" ELEMENTS DURING HIS AFTERNOON ON WEST BANK AND WOULD HAVE PROFITED MORE HAD HE MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE "POWER STRUCTURE", I.E. MAYORS OF LARGER TOWNS. CODEL RECEIVED EXPECTED VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT FROM SENIOR OFFICIALS. ALLON EXPRESSED HIS LONG-HELD OPINION THAT MORE SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE IN THE PAST TO ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT POLITICAL EXPRESSION ON THE PART OF WEST BANKERS, BUT THAT IT WAS PROBABLY TOO LATE FOR THAT NOW. PERES HELD OUT HOPE THAT WEST BANK LEADERS COULD STILL BE ENCOURAGED TO ASSUME MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANAGING THEIR AFFAIRS, BUT DID NOT PRESS POINT. RABIN SAID MANY ARRANGEMENTS ARE POSSIBLE ON WEST BANK BUT THAT SECURITY OF ISRAEL MUST BE ASSURED, GOAL WHICH HE WAS CONVINCED LEFT NO ROLE FOR TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS.

7. CODEL ALSO HAD OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR BASICALLY COMPLEMENTARY VIEWS ON WEST BANK FROM NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY (NRP) AND OPPOSITION LIKUD. YEHUDA BEN-MEIR (LEADER OF NRP YOUTH FACTION) TOLD CODEL THAT, WHILE ISRAEL HAD NOT SOUGHT WAR IN 1967 WHICH LED TO "RETURN" OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA, JEWISH PEOPLE SHOULD NOT NOW RELINQUISH LAND TO WHICH THEY HAVE HISTORIC RIGHT. ARIK SHARON (LIKUD) CITED INEVITABILITY THAT WEST BANK PALESTINIAN STATE WOULD ACQUIRE MODERN WEAPONS AND BECOME PERMANENT THREAT TO ENTIRETY OF ISRAEL, AND EXPOUNDED HIS BELIEF THAT PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE GIVEN EAST BANK. HE ALSO ASSURED CODEL THAT RABIN GOVERNMENT WILL FALL IF IT ATTEMPTS WITHDRAWAL ON WEST BANK. BOTH BEN-MEIR AND

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SHARON ADVOCATED RETENTION BY WEST BANK ARABS OF CITIZENSHIP IN EAST BANK STATE AND THEIR FULL PARTICIPATION IN ITS POLITICAL LIFE, EVEN SHOULD THEY CHOOSE TO RESIDE IN JEWISH STATE.

8. CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADING ISRAELI ACADEMICIANS TENDED TO TURN ON QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT ARAFAT AND PLO ARE SINCERELY WILLING TO RECOGNIZE LEGITIMACY OF EXISTENCE OF JEWISH STATE. MOST CITED ARAFAT'S CONTINUING ESPOUSAL OF "SECULAR DEMOCRATIC STATE" AS EVIDENCE THAT HE IS NOT WILLING. SENATOR MCGOVERN INVARIABLY REFERRED TO FACT THAT ARAFAT HAD TOLD HIM THIS WAS A "VISION" WHICH WOULD ONLY BE REALIZED IN DISTANT FUTURE AFTER PROCESS OF "INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

AND POLITICAL PERSUASION". NEARLY ALL ISRAELIS REACTED TO THIS AS PROOF OF THEIR POINT, STATING IN VARIOUS WAYS THAT ADVOCACY OF DISAPPEARANCE OF ISRAEL IN WHATEVER TIME FRAME CONSTITUTES DISAVOWAL OF ITS LEGITIMACY.

9. ISRAELI MEDIA GAVE CODEL EXTENSIVE, AND FOR MOST PART QUITE FAIR, HARD NEWS COVERAGE, BEGINNING AT ALLENBY BRIDGE. EDITORIALS TOOK AS THEMES TENDENCY OF ARAFAT TO TELL "NAIVE" AMERICANS WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR; UNDERSTANDING THAT SENATOR IS WELL-INTENTIONED BUT DOESN'T HAVE TO LIVE IN ISRAEL; AND NECESSITY FOR GOI TO DEAL WITH APPARENT EROSION OF CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI POSITIONS.

10. COMMENT: SENATOR MCGOVERN CONVEYED TO ISRAELIS WITH WHOM HE CAME IN CONTACT THAT HE WAS MORE CONCERNED WITH HEARING ISRAELI VIEWS THAN IN TRYING TO CHANGE MINDS. LARGELY BECAUSE OF HIS ABILITY TO LISTEN AND TO RESIST SERMONIZING, WE FEEL THAT SENATOR'S VISIT ON BALANCE SERVED AS USEFUL REMINDER THAT, WHILE OTHER MATTERS MAY SEEM TO HAVE MORE IMMEDIACY, PALESTINIAN ISSUE REMAINS TO BE DEALT WITH. A NUMBER OF ISRAELIS REMARKED THAT THEY WERE GLAD THIS ISSUE WAS FINALLY
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OUT IN OPEN AND COULD BE DISCUSSED - IN ISRAELI TERMS-
REALISTICALLY.
DOZIER

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